

Comments on Article Appearing in I. F. Stone's Weekly

On 7 March 65 the New York Times^{See E, p. 5} carried an article reprinted from I. F. Stone's Weekly of 8 March 65 which challenged the validity of the recent State Department paper on Viet Nam. In doing so the article draws what can only be assumed to be deliberate erroneous conclusions. This summary provides answers to the allegations by the article that the evidence of North Vietnam support is flimsy.

The fact that the number of Communist-made weapons captured so far from the Viet Cong (VC) in South Vietnam constitutes only a small percentage of the total captured ("not enough for a battalion" the Stone article states) detracts only slightly from the evidence accumulated of the substantial infiltration of war materiel from North Vietnam. It must be remembered that North Vietnam's leaders have consistently claimed that the insurgency situation in South Vietnam was a "spontaneous indigenous movement" having little or no connection with their regime. In order to maintain this fiction, they are believed to have stressed initially the introduction of French and U.S.-produced weapons -- which could not be traced to them. This approach, in addition to disguising the origin of the weapons, had a number of eminently practical advantages. The North Vietnamese has substantial numbers of French, U.S., Japanese and other weapons which had come into their hands during both World War II and the French - Indochina War. It made sense (and minimized the financial burden of supporting the VC) to pass these on to the guerrillas and keep their newly-acquired Communist Bloc weapons as part of their post - 1954 arms standardization program. Furthermore, it resolved the problems inherent in supplying ammunition and replacement parts for these miscellaneous foreign weapons (if issued to their own forces). Also, ammunition for the French and U.S.-made weapons is similar to that utilized in the weapons in widespread use within the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. Thus, ammunition could be acquired by the guerrillas through capture from government sources.

Frequent reference to the infiltration of weapons from North Vietnam appears in the interrogation reports of captured VC infiltrators. One VC prisoner stated that each month some 500 rifles passed through the way station at which he was stationed on the infiltration route from North Vietnam. The prisoners also described in detail the elaborate system of relay and transport stations operated by both the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong from North Vietnam into and through South Vietnam. This system consists of over 100 stations employing up to 6,000 men for the transport and protection of goods and the guiding of infiltration groups. The majority of these station personnel are obviously not required for control of personnel infiltration, but are part of the elaborate and well-organized network charged with the infiltration of materiel. Note 2.

The need for the infiltration of weapons from sources external to South Vietnam is also clearly evident from a comparison of the probable Viet Cong armed strength with the number of weapons captured by them from government troops. Using the Stony article's statistics, in three years the guerrillas captured 12,300 more weapons than they lost to the government forces. It is estimated that the "main force" Viet Cong alone total at least 35,000, and are supported by another 60 - 80,000 local and village defense type guerrillas. If they captured a "net" of only 12,300 weapons from the government, the deficit certainly could only be made up from outside infiltration. This conclusion is equally applicable to crew-served weapons in the hands of the VC. Although only a few recoilless rifles and mortars were lost by government troops over the past three years, that period has witnessed a dramatic increase countrywide in the use of these weapons by the VC. It is estimated that at least 130 81mm and 82mm mortars and more than 300 60mm mortars are currently in use by the guerrillas. Since only a few were captured, they obviously were acquired through infiltration.

The sinking of the North Vietnamese cargo ship off the coast of Central Vietnam on 16 February 1965 provided additional dramatic evidence to confirm the stories of captured infiltrators that weapons and other war materiel are infiltrated by sea as well as by the overland route. That the GVN has not previously captured such dramatic evidence in no way reduces the irrefutable proof of the magnitude of the DRV support. The considerable body of evidence linking this ship with North Vietnam is described in the State Department White Paper.

Similarly, the evidence of personnel infiltration from the north is incontrovertible. The estimates of total numbers of infiltrators have been compiled from the interrogations of hundreds of prisoners whose individual stories were carefully cross-checked one against the other over the past several years. It is inconceivable that the names, dates, places and voluminous data provided by these infiltrators over that period of time should be nothing more than fiction.

The case histories of ethnic North Vietnamese infiltrators included in the White Paper are merely representative of a considerably larger number who have been captured. Most of these ethnic North Vietnamese have only relatively recently been captured, however. Their stories concerning their military histories are still being studied and evaluated. Naturally, under these circumstances, full data cannot yet be released publicly. ~~Noted~~.

As concerns the charges that the US/GVN effort is a story of lost opportunities ("That Economic Miracle Again") SecDef in a 29 March 64 speech (see pages 3 & 4 attached) adequately describes the true history of events which traces first the political, economic and sociological progress of the GVN following 1954 and, beginning in 1959, Hanoi avowed and aggressive efforts to crush the GVN.

Note: The significance of the 7.62mm ammunition is not in the number rounds captured, although the over a million rounds found with the sunken arms ship recently is no small amount, but rather in the fact that the Viet Cong are arming themselves with weapons which shoot different caliber bullets than the GVN forces. This ammunition is appearing countrywide. First in Dinh Tuong Province in Dec 1964 and again in February with the sinking of the North Vietnamese ship, captured weapons and ammo prove presence of and increasing Viet Cong dependence on a logistics system which can only come from Hanoi.